

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention relates to shoes and, more particularly, to women's shoes in the form of an open-toe sandal having a sole, a heel and a strap which extends across the top of the foot, and wherein a plurality of interchangeable strap covers of various color, material, shape and decorative patterns can be selectively interchanged and attached to the strap in order to alter the appearance of the shoe.

Discussion of the Related Art

For many women, choosing the right shoes to go with a particular outfit can be a challenging task. Typically, the shoe color and pattern are chosen to match a woman's outfit and other accessories, such as a purse and belt. Certain occasions may demand a more formal style and appearance, such as a higher heel in solid black or red. Other times, a casual style may be more appropriate, in which case a woman may choose to wear a flat shoe or lower heel in a color or pattern which matches the casual outfit. Considering the many possibilities faced in making an appropriate shoe selection, it is not surprising that most women accumulate an extensive collection of shoes in their wardrobe.

When traveling, particularly on vacation, it may be tempting to pack as many as ten or more pairs of shoes, ranging from formal to casual, and in different heel heights, colors, patterns and styles so that each outfit in the traveling wardrobe is sure to have a pair of matching shoes. Unfortunately, carrying a large selection of shoes when traveling is not always practical, particularly in view of the recently increased luggage restrictions imposed on airline passengers.

When faced with the practical need to pack light, the shoe selection in one's traveling wardrobe should ideally be limited to just a few pairs. Unfortunately, this may mean having to compromise by wearing shoes that are not really matched to all of the traveler's outfits.

Accordingly, in view of the above noted concerns which women confront when coordinating shoes with various outfits in their wardrobe, particularly when traveling, there is a need for a more versatile women's shoe which can be easily changed to adapt to a particular outfit and occasion. More specifically, there is a need for a women's shoe which can be easily and conveniently changed in color, fabric, style, pattern and overall appearance, thereby allowing the same shoe to be worn with many different outfits ranging from formal to casual.

Summary of the Invention

The present invention is directed to women's shoes, preferably in form of an open-toe sandal style, and including a sole, heel and a strap which extends across the top of the wearer's foot. In order to achieve a variety of styles and appearances, the present invention provides a plurality of interchangeable strap covers of various color, material, shape and pattern (e.g., designs formed by stitching, embroidery, beading, printing, dying and the like). The plurality of strap covers are each selectively attachable to the base strap of the shoe in a manner which fully covers the exposed surface of the base strap, thereby changing the appearance of the shoe. In a preferred embodiment, the strap covers are releasably attachable to the base strap with the use of hook and loop fasteners. For instance, the entire exposed top surface of the base strap may be fitted with a hook component of a hook and loop fastening system. The hook component on the exposed top surface of the base strap will releasably attach to the underside of any of the plurality of strap covers which are each provided with a loop fabric or other suitable material that

is adapted for releasable attachment to the hook component on the base strap. In the preferred embodiment, the base strap is formed to have a bow tie configuration which is wider at the side edges and narrow in the center. The strap covers may be congruently configured in the same bow tie shape or another shape which covers the entire exposed surface of the base strap.

The shoes are naturally provided in different sizes to accommodate the wearer. Additionally, the shoes may be manufactured to have different heel shapes and heights to further enhance the versatility of style and appearance of the shoes. In this manner, when a woman travels, she can pack just two or three pairs of shoes, in different heel heights and/or styles and achieve a multitude of appearances and fashion styles to match all of her outfits, ranging from formal to more casual.

Objects and Advantages of the Invention

With the foregoing in mind, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a women's shoe which is highly versatile and adapted to provide an extensive variety of style and appearances, thereby allowing the same shoe to be worn with many different outfits.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a women's shoe which allows for easy changing of color, style, design and overall appearance, thereby enabling the same shoe to be matched with an extensive variety of clothing and accessories.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a women's shoe, in an open-toe style and having a sole, a heel and a base strap secured to opposite sides of the shoe and extending across of the top of the wearer's foot, and further when the women's shoe includes a plurality of interchangeable strap covers of various color, texture, shape, material and pattern.

It is yet a further object of the present invention to provide a highly versatile women's shoe which includes interchangeable strap covers of varying color, texture, shape, material and pattern, thereby enabling the wearer to conveniently and effectively change the style and appearance of the same shoe.

It is still a further object of the present invention to provide a women's shoe which can be easily and conveniently changed in style and appearance to match many different outfits in a wardrobe, thereby substantially reducing the number of shoes required to be packed in one's luggage when traveling.

These and other objects and advantages of the present invention are more readily apparent with reference to the following detailed description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

Brief Description of the Drawings

For a fuller understanding of the nature of the present invention, reference should be made to the following detailed description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a top, exploded perspective view of the shoe of the present invention illustrating separation of a strap cover to a base strap of the shoe;

Figure 2 is a top perspective view of the shoe of Figure 1 showing the strap cover attached is covering relation to the base strap;

Figure 3 is a side elevational view of a shoe, in accordance with the present invention, showing a higher heel height and a strap cover removed from an underlying base strap;

Figure 4 is a side elevational view of yet another embodiment of the shoe of the present invention, with a lower heel height, and showing the strap cover removed from the base strap of the shoe;

Figure 5 is a side elevational view illustrating yet a further embodiment of the shoe of the present invention, with yet another heel design, and showing the strap cover removed from the base strap of the shoe;

Figure 6 is a top plan view of a strap cover of the present invention; and

Figure 7 is a top plan view of a further embodiment of a strap cover having a generally bow tie shape to match the configuration of the underlying base strap on the shoe.

Like reference numerals refer to like part throughout the several views of the drawings.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

Referring to the several drawings, an initially Figures 1 and 2, the versatile women's shoe of the present invention is shown and is generally indicated as 10. In the various embodiments shown, the women's shoe is preferably in the form of an open-toe style or slip-on sandal which includes a sole 12, a heel 14 and a base strap 16 defining an upper. The upper or base strap 16 is attached on the opposite sides of the shoe sole and is structured to extend across the top of the wearer's foot when the shoe is worn. The shoe, as described thus far, may be any of a variety of well known styles with varying heel heights and shapes, several examples of which are shown in Figures 3-5.

The purpose of the present invention is to provide a highly versatile women's shoe which is particularly adapted to allow the color, fabric, style, pattern and overall appearance of the shoe to be selectively changed so that the same shoe can be matched to many different outfits in a

women's wardrobe. To achieve this purpose, a plurality of strap covers 20 are provided for releasable attachment to the base strap 16 on the shoe 10. The strap covers 20 are specifically sized and configured to cover the entire top surface of the base strap so that, when attached thereto, the strap cover appears to be an integral part of the shoe. In the spirit and scope of the invention it is contemplated the strap covers 20 may be made of any suitable material including, but not limited to, leather and other natural skins, vinyl and other synthetic materials, and woven textiles such as cotton, polyester, silk, and canvas. It is further contemplated that the strap covers 20 may be formed of a rigid or semi-rigid molded material such as from plastic compositions or latex compositions.

In accordance with the present invention, a plurality of the strap covers 20 are provided in various colors, materials, textures, and shapes. Further, the strap covers 20 may include decorative elements 30, such as beads, rhinestones, embroidery, stitching, printing, dying, or other like means to create an ornamental design or appearance of the exposed top side 22 of the strap cover 20. A further example of a decorative element 30 is shown in Figures 3-5 in the form of a 3-dimensional bow.

Each of the plurality of strap covers 20 includes a top side 22, an underside 24, opposite side edges 25, 26, a forward edge 27 and a rear edge 28. When attached to the base strap, as shown in Figure 2, the top side of the strap cover, and any decorative elements 30 thereon, are visibly exposed and provide the dominant feature of appearance (i.e., color, material, texture, and pattern) of the shoe, particularly when the shoe is worn on the wearer's foot.

As described above, each of the strap covers 20 is structured and disposed for releasable attachment to the base strap 16 on the shoe to fully cover the exposed surface of the base strap. In a preferred embodiment, hook and loop fasteners are employed for the purpose of removable

attachment of the strap covers 20 to the base strap 16. However, it is fully contemplated within the spirit and scope of the present invention to provide other means of removable attachment such as, but not limited to, snaps, zippers, friction, releasable adhesives, clips and/or slotted structures. As seen in Figures 1 and 3-5, a preferred embodiment of the present invention uses a hook component fastener 40 on the entire top exposed surface of the base strap 16. In this particular embodiment, it may be preferable to configure the base strap 16 to have a bow tie shape, wherein the center portion of the strap is narrower than the opposite sides which attach to the sides of the shoe sole. The use of a bow tie configuration on the base strap helps to conceal the base strap from view when the cover strap is attached thereto and further reduces the contact surface area between the hook and loop fasteners, thereby making it easier to remove and attach the cover straps 20 to the base strap. Naturally, the loop component 42 of the hook and loop fastening system is applied to the underside 24 of the cover straps 20. The loop component 42 may be comprised of any suitable material which readily attaches to the hook component in a hook and loop fastening system. It is preferred that the loop component material on the underside of the strap covers 20 be of a soft material which does not cause irritation or discomfort when in contact with the skin of the wearer.

Referring again to Figures 3-5, the shoe 10 may be provided with various heel shapes and sizes ranging from a very high heel (see Figure 3) to a low heel (see Figure 4). In this manner, when combined with the plurality of decorative strap covers, the three different shoes shown in Figures 3-5 provide an extensive selection of shoe styles and appearances to coordinate with virtually every outfit in a woman's wardrobe, ranging from formal to very casual.

While the instant invention has been shown and described in accordance with various preferred and practical embodiments thereof, it is recognized that departures from the instant

disclosure are contemplated within the spirit and scope of the present invention which is limited only to the definition of the invention as set forth in the following claims and as interpreted under the doctrine of equivalents.